

**Council on Human Rights  
Friday, February 13, 2004  
Council's Boardroom, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Pocahontas Building**

**Adopted 7/21/04**

**Council Members Present:** Jon D. Strother, Chairman; Christopher Peace, Vice Chairman; Douglas Boulter; David Drachsler; Sam Garrison; Tom Knox; and Jagdish Singh.

**Staff Present:** Rita R. Henderson, Director; Sandra D. Norman, Assistant Director; and Gerald Snead, EEO Manager

**Council's Attorney Present:** Marty Parrish, Assistant Attorney General

**Introductions and Welcome**

The Chairman opened the meeting and greeted all present. He presented the agenda and it was approved as presented. The Chairman then introduced the new Director, Rita R. Henderson and Marty Parrish, the newly appointed Assistant Attorney General. Both extended greetings and gave brief introductions. Council and staff also introduced themselves.

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes from the September 12, 2003 meeting were adopted with corrections.

**Director's Report**

The Director briefed the Council on the following activities: student interns, VAHRC planning committee, and legislation. She reported that two interns are helping staff with analyzing cases by drafting pre-determinations and writing bills of particular for complaints. One intern is from Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and the other intern is from Virginia State University (VSU).

The Council staff hosted the Virginia Association of Human Rights Commissions (VAHRC) planning committee on 1/19/04. During the planning meeting, discussions centered around the annual conference that will be held in June 2004. She reported that the Commission has asked the Council to co-host the annual conference and wanted members to provide feedback about this endeavor. Chairman Strother suggested that the Council could support the annual conference as a co-sponsor by allowing its name to be used on all promotional materials. He further indicated that a partnership would enhance the Council's standing with local human rights commissions. The annual conference could increase the Council's efforts to partner with local human rights commissions.

Director Henderson reported that Senator Benjamin Lambert has drafted a budget amendment to restore the two staff positions that were cut in last year's session of the General Assembly. Additionally, she stated that there are two bills being tracked by the agency, one that directly impacts the Council with regard to filing an annual report and one that indirectly impacts the Council, adding sexual orientation to the Fairfax Human Rights ordinance.

### **Executive Session**

Member Boulter moved to recess and go into a closed executive session to discuss and consider a matter enumerated in Virginia Code 2.2-3711-8A and listed on the agenda for this meeting. The motion was carried. The Council held a lengthy discussion on the appeal process for complainants. It was moved and carried to have the Chairman draft a list of changes to this process.

Member Boulter moved that to the best of the knowledge of the members present, only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements and only such public business matters that were identified in the motion by which the closed session was convened were heard, discussed or considered.

### **Chairman's Report and New Business**

Member Drachsler asked about making changes to the regulations. Ms. Norman stated that the Registrar's office has procedures in place to incorporate changes into the regulations. The Chairman submitted draft copies of the "Virginia Council on Human Rights Policy: Appeal Process." A lengthy discussion followed and changes to this policy were recommended. The Chairman will incorporate the recommendations by the next meeting and have a draft for members, staff, and the Council's attorney to review. Chairman Strother thanked the members for their input in this process.

Member Peace asked Ms. Norman to follow up on a conversation they had regarding a miscommunication that the Council had taken a position on legislation that was introduced dealing with the Department of Fair Housing. Director Henderson and Ms. Norman explained the Governor's position on responding to legislation. Additionally, Ms. Norman explained that when legislation is introduced, agencies that are impacted by the legislation are required to track the corresponding bill. Because it was an issue dealing with housing, the Council on Human Rights would not have been the agency responsible for tracking the bill. The Virginia Association of Human Rights Commissions did take a position on the bill and it is possible that the Council was confused with the Commission.

Chairman Strother circulated a copy of a letter that stated Member Jagdish Singh was nominated and selected by the Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission to receive an award for her work in the area of human rights. The award would be presented during the Human Rights Commission's Tenth Annual Human Rights Program on Tuesday, February 17, 2004 from 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. Chairman Strother and members recognized and congratulated Member Singh.

Member Singh stated that she was recognized by Senator John Kerry because he had made some very irresponsible remarks about Sikhs. Member Singh wrote a letter of protest and corrected his statement about Skhs and asked for Senator Kerry's apology. Senator Kerry did apologize at a meeting in Chesapeake and thanked her for her informative letter.

The meeting adjourned at 3:24 p.m.